

TEST PIT EXCAVATION WITHIN CURRENTLY OCCUPIED RURAL SETTLEMENTS – RESULTS OF THE ENGLISH CORS PROJECT IN 2017

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In 2017, 128 1m² test pits were excavated by more than 480 local secondary school pupils from East Anglia, north Lincolnshire and Hampshire under the supervision of Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA), with a further 20 test pits excavated by community groups. Test pit excavations took place in a total of 14 rural communities in 2017 (Fig. 1). Seven settlements were new additions to the programme (Histon in Cambridgeshire; Foxearth and Wendens Ambo in Essex; Healing and Old Clee in Lincolnshire; and Blythburgh and Rickinghall with Botesdale in Suffolk). Test pit excavation in the other eight settlements built on that previously reported in this journal between 2005 and 2017 (in Riseley in Bedfordshire; Stapleford in Cambridgeshire; Hadleigh and Southminster in Essex; North Warnborough in Hampshire; and Brundall, East (and West) Rudham and Hillington in Norfolk).

The archaeological aims of the CORS project are to carry out standardised test pit excavations to sample inhabited rural settlements, which are places where the presence of contemporary habitation renders other archaeological methods impractical. Finds from the test pits are mapped in order to inform understanding of how the settlements developed over time. Analysis focuses primarily on pottery because this was made and used in great quantities in the medieval period, is widely found in excavation and can be reliably and cost-effectively dated. Correlated against fieldwalking, two sherds or more is considered a possible indicator of intensive activity such as habitation nearby for the Roman, late Anglo-Saxon and later periods, and five sherds or more a strong indicator. Further details of the aims, methods and principles of analysis underpinning the CORS test pit project have been published elsewhere (Lewis 2007a; 2014a).

Reports summarising the weights and dates of pottery from each test pit, along with maps showing the approximate location of test pits, are available on the ACA website. The maps show the distribution of pottery, period by period, from the prehistoric to the modern, for every settlement where test pit excavations have been carried out with ACA since 2005. The summaries in this paper can be explored in more depth if read alongside these maps.

Data on pottery finds from the test pits are submitted each year to the Historic Environment Record (HER) for each county and archive reports are prepared for each test pit showing the precise location and detailing finds. Summaries of the results are published annually in this journal and online. Discussion and conclusions for each settlement are added to create a final archive report after test pit excavation ceases in each settlement. Occasional research papers are published on specific aspects of the results (*e.g.* Lewis 2010; 2015b; 2016a; 2018) and the results will be published in monograph form in due course.

Sites investigated in 2017 are summarised below, listed alphabetically by county and parish name. In these summaries, ‘high medieval’ refers to the period spanning the early twelfth

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to early fourteenth centuries and ‘late medieval’ refers to the period spanning the late 14th to the mid-16th centuries.

Bedfordshire

Riseley, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 042628)

Eight test pits were excavated in Riseley in 2016, bringing the overall total to 39 (Fig. 2), all but one located along the High Street. As in 2016, no pottery dating to the Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon periods was found, adding weight to the inference that the current settlement does not overlie a Roman settlement and that settlement of Anglo-Saxon date may have been of limited extent, perhaps restricted to the area near the junction between Gold Street and Church Lane.

Potentially habitative amounts of pottery of high medieval date were found in just two pits (RIS/17/01 and RIS/17/08), located at opposite ends of the present village. As in previous years, test pits in the centre of the present High Street near the junction with Keysoe Road (RIS/17/05, 06 and 07) produced little or no pottery of 12th to early 14th century date, adding weight to the suggestion (Lewis 2017) that the settlement at this time was divided into at least two separate elements.

This same area has produced large numbers of late medieval oxidised or reduced wares dating to *c.* 1400-1550AD, including in 2017 from test pits RIS/17/05 and RIS/17/07. This suggests that this part of the settlement came into existence at this time, when pottery of this date was being manufactured at least two locations in the village. As in previous years, less pottery of post-medieval date was found, although this is clearly due in part to pottery production in the village ceasing to take place. However, the plan of the village appears to change, with the distribution of post-medieval pottery indicating the settlement was predominantly arranged along the High Street at this time.

Cambridgeshire

Histon and Impington, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 436639)

Histon and Impington are located on the edge of Cambridgeshire Fenland, less than 5km north of the centre of Cambridge. Today these two settlements form a substantial conjoined nucleated village spreading across an area nearly 2km². The 13th-century church of St Andrew in Histon (CHER 10844) lies on the western margins of the existing village, adjacent to an extensive area of earthworks to its west. These are the remains of Histon Manor moated site (CHER 05562), Grange Farm (CHER 05326) and St Etheldreda’s church, which formerly lay within a separate parish (CHER 05327). St Andrews parish church in Impington is *c.* 1.4km from Histon parish church, but similarly it also lies on the margins of the present settlement. Impington church has reused fragments of 12th-century fabric in its chancel (CHER 05548) and excavation in the churchyard in 1994 produced six sherds of Saxon-Norman pottery (Gibson 1994).

The first edition Ordnance Survey maps show that Histon in the mid-19th century had two discrete foci, one near the present church and the other around a large rectangular green some 500m south-east of the church. Both areas of settlement are moderately densely inhabited with the area near the church in particular having a regular linear or rectilinear form. The form of the settlement, defined by dog-legged central village streets of Bell Hill, Windmill Lane and Church Street, hints at the possibility of a gridded layout at this time. Strip fields are clearly

visible in surviving field boundaries. The 19th-century settlement at Impington, 0.75km south-east of Histon Green, is very different to that at Histon, being much smaller, comprising perhaps a dozen houses intermittently strung out along a loose polygonal arrangement of lanes looping around the church.

24 test pits were excavated at Histon and Impington in 2017 (Fig. 3) by a combination of school students who excavated fourteen pits, and Histon and Impington Archaeology Group who excavated fourteen more. These added to a total of 28 test pits excavated by Histon and Impington Archaeology Group in 2016, bringing the total to date to 56. The majority of these have been located in Histon, with a dozen sited on or near the earthworks west of the surviving parish church. Only one test pit (HIS/16/07) has been excavated so far within the 19th-century footprint of Impington village.

Two test pits produced Bronze Age pottery, one near Histon St Andrews and the other north of Histon Green parish church, with the latter (HIS/16/12) producing a substantial assemblage suggestive of settlement or funerary activity nearby. Seventeen pits have produced Romano-British pottery. Most of these are located on the margins of the present settlement in the earthworks west of Histon St Andrews, but substantial numbers of sherds were also found in pits north and south of Histon Green. The pattern is suggestive of intensive activity in the Roman period, perhaps arranged as a series of habitative nodes favouring the 15m contour line either side of westward-flowing Beck Brook which today dog-legs around Histon Manor moated site. It would appear plausible that some of the earthworks around the medieval moated site may be of Roman rather than medieval date, as test pit excavation proved to be the case at Boxworth, also in Cambridgeshire (Taylor 2003).

Eight test pits produced early Anglo-Saxon pottery, an unusually high number given that less than 2% of test pits in East Anglian CORS typically produce any pottery of this date (Lewis 2010; Lewis 2014a). Four of the 2017 pits produced more than one sherd and one (HIS/16/12) produced more than four sherds. This pit, as well as the other six near Histon St Andrews church, all lie in areas which produced Romano-British pottery, hinting at a degree of continuity here. Two test pits produced pottery of middle Anglo-Saxon date: a single sherd of Ipswich Ware north of Histon St Andrews and one from a lone test pit sited south of Impington College (HIS/16/26). Interestingly, this latter test pit also produced small amounts of Romano-British and early Anglo-Saxon pottery.

Seventeen pits produced pottery of late Anglo-Saxon date, with fifteen of these yielding more than a single sherd: this is thus present in 27% of all pits excavated to date in Histon and Impington, a much higher average than is usual in East Anglian CORS (Lewis 2010; Lewis 2014a). The distribution of these sites in Histon is broadly similar to that of the Roman period, except for the area south of Histon Green, which appears to have come into habitative use at this time, perhaps for the first time. The test pit near Impington church also produced substantial quantities of pottery of this date, suggesting that this area also was in use for settlement by this time.

In the high medieval period, 32 of the 56 excavated pits (57%) produced habitative amounts of pottery, an unusually high percentage (Lewis 2014a). In Histon all sites along the dog-legged route followed by Bell Hill, Windmill Lane and Church Street produced large amounts of 12th–14th century pottery. Interestingly, the test pits within the earthworks west of Histon St Andrew Church produce noticeably fewer sherds than those elsewhere, suggesting that settlement may have been shifting away from this area before the 14th century. All pits in the south of the present village and in Impington produced substantial quantities of high medieval pottery.

The late medieval period (late 14th – mid 16th century) saw a dramatic decline in the number of pits containing pottery, with only nine (16%) producing more than a single sherd. The area around Histon St Andrew Church appears to be particularly badly affected as the

formerly densely inhabited settlement appears to fragment into two or possibly three small dispersed nodes, one along Guns Lane in the north of the present settlement, one in the rectangular area south-east of St Andrew's church, and one around Histon Green. The test pit near Impington church produced no pottery of this date. The severity of the impact of this late medieval contraction is hinted at by the length of time it took to recover: even by the end of the 18th century, Histon had not recovered to its pre-14th-century size.

Stapleford, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 473517)

Five test pits were excavated in Stapleford in 2017 (Fig. 4), bringing the total to 32. The 2017 pits were strategically sited to explore areas where test pitting had not previously taken place. Four of these produced Romano-British pottery, although in no case was there more than a single sherd and all sherds were small, none heavier than 6g, suggesting non-intensive land use, such as arable. No material of Anglo-Saxon date was found and the only pit to produce habitative amounts of high medieval pottery was STA/17/04, located on low-lying ground south of Bury Lane near the River Granta on the southern edge of the present settlement. This pit was sited mid-way between two others: STA/15/08, which produced two tiny sherds of high medieval pottery in 2015 (Lewis 2016b), and STA/13/01 at Bury Farm, which produced two tiny sherds of late medieval pottery in 2013 (Lewis 2014c). Together these finds hint at the possibility that there may have been a small node of more intensive activity on the southern margins of the present settlement, in an area that was otherwise used for arable or meadow.

No pottery of late medieval date was found in any of the 2017 test pits, reinforcing the pattern noted in previous years of a marked decline in the extent and intensity of activity in Stapleford after the 14th century. When the settlement started to grow again in the 16th–18th centuries, it seems to have shifted north, with little or no pottery of this date found from the riverside areas of the settlement either side of Bury Lane and very little from the nearby southern end of Bar Lane.

Essex

Foxearth, Essex (NGR TL 834446)

Foxearth is located in north Essex close to the border with Suffolk, *c.* 20km south of Bury St Edmunds and *c.* 25km north-west of Colchester. Today it is a small nucleated village little more than 300m², excluding the moated site around the 13th-century Foxearth Hall (EHER 8505) with 16th-century barn and byre (EHER 8506): this complex lies 100m or so north of the present village. The village today appears notably square in plan, formed around three streets with the 14th-century church of St Peter and St Paul (EHER 27817) in the north-east corner. Housing is today arranged along the east-west-orientated School Street (the main street through the village) and The Street which runs north-west from School Street past Hunters Lodge and Foxearth Hall. Additional housing lies either side of Claypits Lane, which runs south from the eastern end of School Street, continuing the line of a footpath leading north to the church.

In the 19th century the settlement was smaller, with no housing along Claypits Lane. Hints of an earlier symmetrical square village plan bisected by School Lane survive in field boundaries, possibly suggesting that habitation along the lane leading east from The Street to the church may have developed along the back lane to this settlement. Alternatively, the early settlement could have developed as two parallel east-west orientated rows which merged as the

settlement grew. Houses east of The Street on the north side of the village were set back from the road hinting at the possibility of a small green here.

Eight test pits were excavated in Foxearth in 2017 (Fig. 5), one near the church, two along School Street, four along The Street (three of these midway along it near Hunter's Lodge and the fourth at its southern end) and one c. 0.6km west of the present village near the 17th-century Huntsman's Farm (EHER 27811) at the west end of a footpath from the village. With such a small number of pits excavated to date, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions, but some observations can be made. Two pits, one near Huntsman's Cottage and one near the church, produced Roman pottery, although neither in large amounts. The single small (5g) sherd from Huntsman's Cottage (FOX/17/08) is likely to be from non-intensive use such as arable manuring, while FOX/17/01 produced two sherds, which might possibly hint at some more substantial use of this site in the Roman period. A similarly small (6g) sherd of Ipswich Ware from FOX/17/03 at the junction between School Street and The Street is also difficult to interpret. Although apparently insignificant, this material is a relatively rare find from test pits, and therefore should not be lightly dismissed – it may relate to habitation nearby, but then again it may not. One test pit (FOX/17/07) produced later Anglo-Saxon Thetford Ware, from a site midway along The Street near Huntsman's Lodge, some 300m away from the Ipswich Ware site.

Six test pits produced high medieval pottery, although three of these yielded only a single sherd, including the two on the east of the present settlement nearest the church. FOX/17/07 produced 39 sherds of this date and can be inferred with some confidence to indicate habitation in the immediate vicinity, that is, midway along The Street c. 250m north-west of the church. This is the same pit which produced two sherds of Thetford Ware, hinting at continuity of occupation in this area. Two other pits along The Street also produced smaller amounts of high medieval pottery, suggesting that this was a significant area within the medieval settlement. Whether this extended continuously along its length towards School Street and/or the area around the church is impossible to tell from the small number of test pits excavated to date.

Only three pits produced late medieval pottery, one in each of the high medieval productive nodes (two along the Street and one near the church). Only FOX/17/07 (along The Street near Huntsman's Lodge) produced more than a single sherd, although this did yield a reasonable assemblage of six sherds including one of Cistercian ware and an unusual sherd of Spanish tin-glazed ware dating to AD 1500-1600. On current evidence, it seems that Foxearth was a small place in the medieval period which contracted further after the mid-14th century, although at least one household near Huntsman's Lodge does seem to have thrived at this time.

All pits except one produced post-medieval pottery, with the pits in the south of village along School Lane yielding fewer than those to the north. These included FOX/17/01 adjacent the church, which for the first time produced more than two sherds, including one small sherd of Chinese porcelain along with four sherds of more utilitarian pottery. With the exception of the Huntsman's Lodge/The Street site, the post-medieval assemblage is dominated by utilitarian wares (red earthenwares and English stonewares).

Hadleigh, Essex (NGR TQ 811871)

Twelve test pits were dug in Hadleigh in 2017 (Fig. 6), bringing the total to 34. No pottery was found predating the 12th century, and it remains the case that no material of Anglo-Saxon date has been recovered from any of the 34 test pits excavated in Hadleigh to date. Pottery of high medieval date was found in eight of the pits excavated in 2017, but only in HAD/17/04, HAD/17/10, HAD/17/11 and HAD/17/12 was there more than a single sherd recovered. Two distinct clusters of test pits producing potentially habitative amounts of material of this date are

increasingly apparent, one immediately north-east of the medieval church on the eastern end of the market place, and the other south-west of market place along Homestead Way and Homestead Gardens. This suggests that the settlement in both these areas was more extensive in the medieval period than is indicated on the 19th century Ordnance Survey maps, and especially so in the Homestead Way/Gardens area. Here it may have been located on or beyond the irregular southern perimeter of a large green. In contrast, 600m west of the church along Chapel Lane (running towards Sayers Farm), all four excavated test pits produced only single sherds of this date, suggestive of arable manuring. Eleven pits south of the church along Castle Lane also produced small amounts of pottery, only very tentatively indicative of more intensive activity in the area nearest the castle.

These same two areas produced the only late medieval pottery found in 2017, but only HAD/17/04, in the Homestead area, produced more than a single sherd. This reflects the general decrease in activity indicated by the pottery after the 14th century, when the number of pits producing potentially habitative amounts of pottery drops from twelve to five. This hints at the possibility that settlement contracted to focus on the area closest to the market place and church, especially in the Homestead area where the southernmost pits along or beyond the green margins appear to have been abandoned. Post-medieval pottery was recovered from five pits in 2017, but only in significant amounts from HAD/17/04 and HAD/17/10: both these pits produced creamware (four and sixteen sherds respectively) and a sherd of Chinese porcelain was recovered from HAD/17/04. This material is uncommon in rural settlements, and is likely to reflect Hadleigh's coastal location.

Southminster, Essex (NGR TQ 958996)

Ten test pits were excavated in Southminster in 2017 (Fig. 7), bringing the total to date to 31. Four were sited near the parish church, a further four south-east of the present settlement near the railway station and two along Queen Street c. 0.5km west of the church.

Test pit SOU/17/08 near the railway line produced one small sherd of the first Iron Age pottery recovered from any test pits in Southminster, and nearby SOU/17/07 produced an even smaller (1g) sherd of Romano-British pottery. This lies close to SOU/15/11, which produced six sherds of Romano-British pottery in 2015 and together these appear likely to indicate some sort of activity below the 20m contour south-east of the present settlement in the Roman period.

As in previous years, no pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was found in 2017, but six pits produced high medieval pottery. These included single sherds from SOU/17/02 on Queen Street and in SOU/17/09 and SOU/17/10 to the south of the present settlement: these are unlikely to be indicative of habitation but may indicate arable field manuring around the settlement. The settlement at Southminster appears to have been founded in its present location sometime in the 12th–14th century, when it seems to have clustered tightly around the church.

Five pits produced late medieval pottery, but only two yielded potentially habitative numbers of sherds. Overall, the settlement seems to be little changed in this period, although there is some hint from test pits on the margins of the present settlement that it may have become somewhat more dispersed at this time, but possibly growing in size overall. If so, this anticipates a marked increase in the post-medieval period as nearly all pits produce pottery of this date. This includes five pits excavated in 2017, most notably the two along Queen Street which suggest that habitation extended further along this area at this time than has previously been observed.

Wendens Ambo, Essex (NGR TL 512363)

Wendens Ambo is a small settlement located 23km south of Cambridge and 15km north of Bishops Stortford. The settlement today lies mostly on the north side of a small tributary brook of the River Granta, arranged either side of east-west orientated Station Road and Duck Street which runs south and then south-west from the western end of Station Road, crossing the brook shortly after it leaves Station Road. South of the brook, Rookery Lane extends east from the south end of Duck Lane to join Mutlow Hill (the main B1383 road) which runs north to rejoin the eastern end of Station Road. The 11th-century church of St Mary the Virgin which contains some Roman brick (EHER 217; 218) lies within the north-western corner of this loosely pentangular arrangement of roads, today accessed from Station Road via Church Path. The southern part of the present settlement (where Duck Street joins Rookery Lane) is called Norton End, and this lies c. 0.5km north-east of a Roman villa excavated in 1853 and 1993 (EHER169) (Neville 1954, 77-8; Atkinson 1993). Pagan Anglo-Saxon burials have been found near the church (EHER 229) and Roman and medieval features have been identified along Duck Lane (EHER 47766; 46000) (Dyson *et al.* 2011; Wightman 2009). The 'Ambo' element of the place name means 'both' as the parish today includes both formerly separate parishes of Great and Little Wenden (Ekwall 1940, 482). The site of the former parish church of Little Wenden is marked on 19th-century maps, but excavation in 1975 did not reveal any trace of this (EHER 162) (Robertson 1975).

In the mid-19th-century, the settlement was more exclusively focused north of the brook and clustered around the church, with only a handful of cottages and farms to its south along Duck Street and Rookery Lane, or to its east along Station Road.

Eleven test pits were excavated in Wendens Ambo in 2017 (Fig. 8), seven along the northern end of Duck Lane, three to its west along Chinnell Lane (close to the present M11 motorway) and two along Rookery Lane in Norton End. The earliest pottery dated to the Roman period, recovered from WAM/17/03, the westernmost pit excavated along Chinnell Lane and the closest to the site of the Roman villa. Only four sherds of this date were found, however, and none in nearby pits (WAM/17/00 and WAM/17/05), suggesting the area may have been mostly in non-intensive, perhaps agricultural, use at this time rather than the site of any more intensive activity, although three sherds found in the lowest excavated context (30-40cm) of WAM/17/03 does hint at the possibility that more material of this date might survive in lower levels.

The only material of Anglo-Saxon date was a single tiny (1g) sherd) of Thetford ware found in WAM/10/10, sited west of Duck Lane, barely 100m from the church. Four pits produced pottery of high medieval date, all along Duck Lane, although only WAM/17/10 produced more than two sherds. Here, however, the presence of nine sherds is highly suggestive of habitation in the immediate vicinity. This is the same pit which produced Thetford ware, hinting at the possibility of this site being in use from at least the very early 12th century and possibly earlier. Two pits (WAM/17/03 and 06) produced late medieval pottery, but only a single sherd was found in each pit. While this may be indicative of contraction, with only eleven pits excavated so far, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this apparent lack of post-14th-century pottery.

Seven pits produced post-medieval pottery, including two along Rookery Lane. This may be the date at which this southern part of the present settlement came into habitative use, although with only very small numbers of sherds it is difficult to be confident about this. It is interesting to note, however, that these included relatively expensive wares including Staffordshire slipware and Chinese porcelain.

Hampshire

North Warnborough (NGR SU 731515)

Nine test pits were excavated in North Warnborough in 2017, bringing the total since 2013 to 54 (Fig. 9). No prehistoric or Romano-British pottery was found and, as in previous years, no Anglo-Saxon pottery was found either from this settlement which appears from the test pit data to have come into existence on its present location in the 12th to 14th century, possibly founded in connection with the construction of nearby Odiham Castle in the early 13th century.

Five test pits produced high medieval pottery in 2017, but as in previous years, only in small amounts with none producing more than a couple of sherds. Overall, it seems increasingly likely that North Warnborough in the high medieval period lay mostly north of Swan Bridge where habitation may have been more densely arranged along both sides of Hook Street. The area south of Swan Bridge, in contrast, seems likely to have been more thinly or intermittently inhabited, and it is even possible there was little or no habitation in this area in this period.

Only a single sherd of late medieval pottery was found across all of the pits excavated in 2017 (in NWA/17/06), reinforcing the pattern noted in previous years of considerable contraction after the 14th century. Of the twelve pits excavated since 2013 north of the Swan Bridge, seven produced two or more sherds of high medieval pottery (many producing considerable amounts) while only one did so in the succeeding period. In the post-medieval period, however, the settlement sees an upturn in its fortunes, with all the pits excavated in 2017 producing pottery of this date. These assemblages are however dominated by relatively inexpensive or local wares.

Lincolnshire

Healing, Lincolnshire (NGR TA 213101)

Healing is situated in north Lincolnshire on the south side of the Humber Estuary, *c.* 6km west of Grimsby. The village today is a nucleated settlement approximately 800m in length, arranged along two main parallel streets (flanked by other residential estates and closes) that run south-west from the railway station towards the 13th-century parish church of St Peter and St Paul. The vast majority of today's settlement is of 20th-century origin, with the mid-19th-century settlement comprising barely ten houses including a manor house adjacent to the church and a moated site.

Seven test pits were excavated in Healing in 2017 (Fig. 10), four north of the church within the area of the 19th-century settlement, one near the moated site (HEA/17/03) and two *c.* 500m to its south along Aylesby Lane near a building named The Homestead in the 19th century (HEA/17/01 and HEA/17/02).

HEA/17/04, the closest test pit to the church, produced the earliest pottery, but this amounted to just two sherds, probably of mid-late 12th-century date. Although few in number, these predate the earliest surviving upstanding remains of the church and, probably, the moated site. Adjacent test pit HEA/17/05 produced two sherds of high medieval pottery of 13th to early 14th-century date. The size of these sherds, weighing a substantial combined total of 50g, make it more likely that they relate to habitation in the vicinity rather than non-intensive use such as manuring, although such an inference must be considered tentative.

No pottery was found which could be confidently dated to the late medieval period, when test pit excavation shows many settlements contracted in size (Lewis 2016a): the only possible find of this date was a single sherd of medieval Humber Basin ware from HEA/17/03, but this

has a very broad date range from 1250 to 1500 AD, and thus could as easily predate as postdate the 14th century. This pit was located adjacent to the moated site, but this tiny sherd (3g) was the only find of pottery from this site and this would not normally be considered sufficient to infer habitation in the vicinity.

A slightly larger assemblage of post-medieval sherds dating to the 16th to 18th century was recovered near the church from HEA/17/05 (six sherds), while HEA/17/01 (outside the present settlement near The Homestead in the 19th century) produced a notable assemblage of 27 sherds of 18th century pottery, including English porcelain and a white stoneware tea bowl, suggestive of a wealthy household in the vicinity at this time.

Old Clee, Lincolnshire (NGR TA 289084)

Old Clee lies on flat low-lying land below 10m OD, c. 2km inland from the southern side of the mouth of the Humber River, c. 2km south of Grimsby Docks and approximately the same distance west of the centre of the seaside town of Cleethorpes. The 11th-century church (HE listed building 1379405) and adjacent lanes are today entirely surrounded by extensive conurbation extending out from Grimsby and Cleethorpes, with which Old Clee is now entirely contiguous. A moat is indicated on Ordnance Survey maps from the 1960s around Clee Hall Farm c. 150m south-east of the church.

Old Clee was entirely different in the 19th century, when it took the form of a tiny isolated hamlet of barely a dozen buildings arranged along a sinuously curving lane leading to the church, south-east of which were Clee Hall Farm and the courtyard-style Sidney Farm. The settlement at this time was surrounded by fields and lay more than 1.5km from Cleethorpes and Grimsby and 800m from the nearby deserted settlement of Weelsby.

Eight test pits were excavated in Old Clee in 2017 (Fig. 11), all sited within 150m of the church. One sherd of Stamford Ware from OCL/17/06 was the earliest pottery recovered, but this is more likely to be of 12th-century than pre-Conquest date. Pottery dated to the high medieval period was recovered from four pits in total, but only two of these produced more than a single sherd and none produced more than four sherds. The most notable find of this date was from OCL/17/02 which produced one sherd from a decorated knight jug or face jug, suggesting a household of some pretension nearby.

No confirmed pottery of late medieval date was found, with the only possible find of this date being a broadly dated single sherd of 12th to 15th-century local ware from OCL/17/08. However, with such a small number of pits excavated it is impossible to draw any conclusions from this sort of negative evidence.

Five pits produced pottery of post-medieval date, with a large assemblage including two sherds of London stoneware in OCL/17/04 particularly notable as this is rare occurrence in Lincolnshire.

Norfolk

Brundall, Norfolk (NGR TG 325084)

Nine test pits were excavated in Brundall in 2017 (Fig. 12), bringing the total to 41. The finds recovered were very similar to those in previous years (Lewis 2016b; 2017). BRU/17/06 produced a single small sherd (3g) of Romano-British pottery from the same area which produced Roman and early Anglo-Saxon pottery in 2015 (BRU/15/06). This same area also produced small amounts of Bronze Age pottery.

Only two pits in 2017 (BRU/17/02 and 05) produced pottery of high medieval date, neither yielding more than a single 3g sherd. No pottery of late medieval date was found in 2017.

For the post-medieval period, the modest assemblage included a relatively high proportion of non-local wares including Delft Ware and Cologne Stoneware, reflecting the settlement's location on the river Yare near the coast and between the port of Great Yarmouth and the major medieval city of Norwich.

East and West Rudham, Norfolk (NGR TF 825218)

Ten test pits were excavated at East Rudham in 2017 (Fig. 13), bringing the total to date to 19. All pits were sited in areas not investigated in 2016, two on the eastern side of East Rudham along Eye Lane and the other eight along the southern side of the large common at West Rudham, either side of a moated site.

As in 2016, no material pre-dating the late Anglo-Saxon period was found, but two pits did produce pottery of this date, including a substantial assemblage of six sherds found in ERU/17/03, near the main focus of today's settlement in West Rudham along the present through-road to East Rudham. Three pits nearest the moated site produced high medieval pottery, two yielding just single sherds but the third (ERU/17/04) produced seven sherds suggesting the settlement extended southward along the common at this time, when it is reasonable to infer the moated site was constructed. This area (although not the same pit) also produced pottery of late medieval date, as well as eight sherds of post-medieval pottery. The area to the north, in contrast, produced no late medieval pottery and only a single tiny sherd of post-medieval pottery across the four pits. This suggests this area continued in habitative use in the late medieval and early modern period, although it did not produce any 19th–20th century pottery. The area east of East Rudham did not produce more than a single sherd of pottery predating the 19th century and may be a recent extension to the settlement.

Hillington, Norfolk (NGR TF 722 254)

Nine test pits were excavated in Hillington in 2017 (Fig. 14), bringing the total to 26. Three were sited west of the church and the other five along the main road, with three (HIL/17/06, HIL/17/07 and HIL/17/08) sited in Pasture Close and near Buck house, *c.* 200m west of the nearest previous test pits at the point where the church road meets the main road.

Two pits produced prehistoric pottery in 2017, but of different dates. A single small sherd of Bronze Age pottery from HIL/17/04 was found close to the main road, more than 300m from the cluster of pottery of the same date found near the church in previous test pit excavations (Lewis 2016b; 2017). This distance, combined with the lack of material of the same date from pits in the area between these sites, makes it tempting to infer a discrete area of activity near the road at this time. The single 12g sherd from HIL/17/06 is the only find of Iron Age date to have come from any of the pits in Hillington to date.

HIL/17/05 produced the first sherd of early Anglo-Saxon pottery found so far from test pit excavation in Hillington, in a test pit located near the main road not far from HIL/17/04 which produced a single sherd of middle Anglo-Saxon pottery. This hints at possibly continuity of activity in this area, and as this area is at least 250m from middle Anglo-Saxon pottery found in test pits near the church in 2015 (HIL/15/03) (Lewis 2016b), it may represent a discrete node of activity.

Five pits produced late Anglo-Saxon pottery in 2017, confirming the picture gained in previous years of expansive activity at this time. Small numbers of sherds from HIL/17/02 and HIL/17/03 (two sherds from each pit) suggest that settlement at this time may have extended for 100m or so west of the church, while pottery from HIL/17/04 and HIL/17/05 (immediately south of the main road) substantiate the suggestion that there was a possible separate node of activity likely to relate to habitation in this area. Three sherds of Thetford Ware from HIL/17/08, 300m to the west near the main road close to Buck House, may indicate settlement in the vicinity, perhaps indicating a third element in an apparently dispersed, possibly shifting, settlement pattern.

Five pits produced pottery of high medieval date (HIL/17/03, HIL/17/04, HIL/17/05, HIL/17/07 and HIL/17/08), all located in the same areas (although not all from the same pits) which produced late Anglo-Saxon pottery, suggesting these areas of activity continued in the 12th to 14th century, although they do not appear to have grown in size in this period. Activity in the area around Buck House can be interpreted as probable settlement with greater confidence, with HIL/17/08 yielding a total of sixteen sherds of 12th to 14th-century date.

Only two pits produced pottery of later medieval date in 2017, a small number which nonetheless doubles the total number from previous years. None of the four pits which have produced pottery of this date in Hillington since 2015 have yielded more than a single sherd of 14th to 16th century pottery and these are scattered across all three settlement nodes (the church cluster, the eastern main road cluster and the Buck House/western main road cluster). That not one pit out of the 26 now excavated has produced more than a single sherd of late medieval pottery suggests Hillington was almost, if not completely, deserted at this time.

As in previous years, only small numbers of post-medieval sherds were found in 2017, present in just three pits. This suggests that recovery was limited in the post-medieval period, perhaps not really established until the 18th century, but the evidence suggests that all three previous settlement nodes did eventually come back into habitative use. There were however no imported wares in the post-medieval assemblage and more than half the recovered sherds were utilitarian glazed red earthenwares, although two small sherds of 18th century white salt-glazed stoneware from HIL/17/04 and 05 may hint at a wealthier or more aspirational household in the eastern main road area.

Suffolk

Blythburgh, Suffolk (NGR TM 452752)

Blythburgh lies on a low-lying spur of land, c. 7m above OD on the south side of the River Blyth adjacent to a large tidal lagoon, c. 4.5km inland from the Suffolk coast, 5.5km west of the seaside town of Southwold, 20km south-west of the port of Lowestoft and 43km north-east of Ipswich. Blythburgh today is a small village cut in two by the main A12 road between Ipswich and Lowestoft, with the 14th-century parish church of the Holy Trinity located just above the floodplain on the western edge of the settlement. A church at Blythburgh was recorded in Domesday Book, which may refer to the parish church or the priory (SHER BLB 001) whose remains lie immediately north-west of the parish church. Blythburgh has been identified as a possible Domesday minster site (Scarfe 1999) and a market was recorded at Blythburgh by 1066 (SHER BLB 025), accounting for the 'burgh' element of the place name. Blythburgh is reputedly the burial site of East Anglian king Anna who was killed in battle in AD 654, and while the documented foundation date of the priory is c. AD 1125, the discovery of two burials of 8th and 10th-century date within the precinct boundary in 2008 adds weight to the suggestion that this was the site of the Domesday minster and perhaps Anna's shrine

(Wessex Archaeology 2009). Much of today's settlement lies clustered along a rectangular arrangement of streets immediately east of the parish church, which include Chapel Lane (on the southern side), Priory Road (on the northern side, Angel Lane (on the east), and The Street (connecting Priory Road and Chapel Lane). These streets define the core of the village which is just 300m². A handful of properties lies along Church Lane which runs south-west from the church and the ribbon development extends for c. 400m along Dunwich Road, which runs south from the point where Chapel Road and Angel Lane meet.

In the 19th century, the village had already been cut by the main road, with the White Hart Inn positioned on the north side of the village to attract passing travellers. Otherwise the settlement was then more tightly focused near the church, arranged along Chapel Lane and Priory Road but with no habitation either side of Angel Lane on the east, while along Dunwich Road to its south there were just three farms and a Methodist chapel.

Thirteen test pits were excavated in Blythburgh in 2017 (Fig. 15), located in all parts of the present village except along Dunwich Road. No pottery of prehistoric or Roman date was found, but a 7g sherd of Ipswich Ware from BLY/17/08 (the southernmost excavated in 2017, sited near the junction between Chapel Lane and Angel Lane) hints at the possibility of activity of some sort in this area in the 8th or early 9th century. Two pits produced pottery of late Anglo-Saxon date, each just a single sherd, one (BLY/17/09) sited little more than 50m from BLY/17/08, the other (BLY/17/13) c. 200m to the north, 100m east of the church.

Six pits produced high medieval pottery, but only in BLY/17/04 were there more than three sherds found. The presence of more than 20 sherds in this pit make it highly likely that there was habitation in this area, near the main road on the north of the present settlement, some distance from the church. The other pits which produced pottery of this date were scattered across the present settlement with no notable concentration, although it is interesting to note that none of the three pits nearest the church and the priory produced any material of this date. The settlement thus seems on present evidence to have been very small and perhaps dispersed in the high medieval period. While it is difficult to draw inferences when only a small number of pits have been excavated, the lack of material of late Anglo-Saxon and high medieval date so far is surprising, given the apparent status of Blythburgh in Domesday Book, and hints at the possibility that the Saxo-Norman settlement may not have been located under the main footprint of today's village.

This situation appears to have changed dramatically after the 14th century. All but three pits produced pottery of late medieval date, and in five of these (two along The Street and the others at either end of Angel Lane) this was found in considerable quantities: BLY/17/04 produced more than 80 sherds of this date, BLY/17/07 ten; and BLY/17/08 and BLY/17/13 fifteen each. The distribution of pits favours Angel Lane and The Street, with little or no late medieval pottery found in pits on the north-west of the present village nearest the church and priory. In a period when the majority of test pits show a decrease probably reflecting post-14th century demographic decline (Lewis 2016a), this rise in the volume of pottery recovered, and the number of sites where it was found, is notable. Interestingly, Blythburgh appears to be another example of a settlement in Suffolk which was able to weather the changed social and economic conditions and attract people at this time: other examples are nearby Walberswick, Nayland and Long Melford (Lewis 2013, 2014c, 2015b, 2016b, 2017).

A similar distribution is apparent in the post-medieval period: all pits produced pottery of this date, but it was found in lesser amounts in pits in the west of the village. The presence of imported stonewares from Germany in five of the test pits hints at a dynamic, connected community engaged in cross-channel trade, while the presence of white salt-glazed stoneware used for tea drinking in seven pits (HIL/17/02, HIL/17/05, HIL/17/06, HIL/17/07, HIL/17/08, HIL/17/09 and HIL/17/13) hints at households of some wealth and pretension along Angel Lane and Priory Road.

Rickingham and Botesdale, Suffolk (NGR TM 044755)

Rickingham and Botesdale are located in Suffolk *c.* 8.5km south-west of Diss and 22km north-east of Bury St Edmunds. They are two formerly separate linear villages which have now become conjoined along The Street which forms the main axis and artery for both villages. Rickingham was formerly itself two separate parishes, Rickingham Inferior and Rickingham Superior, and the village now has two churches with the former parish boundary running down The Street. Today settlement at Rickingham is arranged either side of The Street and along Bury Road, which continues in the same south-westerly direction towards Bury St Edmunds, along Hinderclay Road running north-west from the Street, and along Rectory Lane which runs south-east towards the now-isolated parish church of St Mary Rickingham Superior (SHER RKS 018). These four roads meet in the centre of Rickingham near the Saxo-Norman church of St Mary in Rickingham Inferior (SHER RKN 021). 13th century pottery and a tomb dated to AD 1492 were found during excavations at the isolated church of St Mary Rickingham Superior in 1953.

Botesdale is now the larger of the two villages and measures more than 1km in length (although *c.* 150m of the settlement along The Street technically lies within the parish of Rickingham Inferior). At approximately the midpoint of the present village, The Street bifurcates, with Back Hills taking a more northerly line and The Street continuing north-east. Botesdale lacked a church until AD 1500 when a chapel of ease (SHER BOT 009) was built from the mother church of St Mary the Virgin in Redgrave. The village of Redgrave is *c.* 1.5km to the north of Botesdale, while its isolated parish church is 2.3km from Botesdale. In spite of this marginal appearance, huggin parish boundaries and lacking a church, at least one house in Botesdale dates to the 14th century (SHER BOT 010). Both Botesdale and the Rickinghalls lie along the parish boundaries between the three parishes, which follow a dog-legging rectilinear line respecting boundaries of fields and drains and may be inferred to be relatively late.

In the 19th century the villages were already conjoined end-to-end along the Street as a linear settlement which was nearly 2km in length. Rickingham was a linear settlement arranged either side of The Street as it runs north-east from St Mary's Rickingham Inferior Church at its southern end towards Botesdale. The Church of St Mary in Rickingham Superior was then entirely isolated *c.* 0.5km south of the present village down Rectory Lane, in an area then called Candle Street. The layout of Botesdale was mostly similar to today although habitation extended less far north The Street and there were very few houses at all along Back Hills and none on its west side.

Six test pits were excavated in 2017 (Fig. 16), all in Botesdale with all but one along The Street, mostly near the point where this meets Back Hills, and the other (RAB/17/04) along Back Hills itself. The northernmost pit (RAB/17/06) produced a single tiny (4g) sherd of late Bronze Age pottery, but otherwise nothing was found pre-dating the 12th century. Pottery of high medieval date was recovered from three pits, but only one (RAB/17/01) produced more than a single sherd and that yielded just four sherds. The two southernmost pits excavated in 2017 were the only ones to produce late medieval pottery, with a single sherd from RAB/17/02 and five sherds from RAB/17/01. There is thus no evidence of intensive activity such as habitation dating to the medieval period from any of the pits excavated to date.

The pattern changes after the sixteenth century, with all pits producing pottery of this date, although mostly in small amounts. While it is impossible to make inferences based on such a small number of pits excavated to date, it seems possible that this is the period when this part of Botesdale came into more intensive use. RAB/17/03, closest the point where The Street meets Back Hills, produced a notably large assemblage of this date including 17 sherds

of glazed red earthenware and 26 sherds of imported German Cologne stoneware, although most of these came from a single vessel.

Conclusion

By the end of 2017, the total number of test pits excavated under ACA supervision reached 2,368. Archive reports have been prepared for each test pit excavated in each settlement and are held by ACA at the University of Cambridge. Details of the 2017 test pit sites and earlier reports are available to view at www.access.arch.cam.ac.uk/reports.

Test pit excavation in CORS in the eastern region will continue in 2018 as a joint programme between the University of Cambridge and the University of Lincoln, with fieldwork managed by Alison Dickens at the University of Cambridge and academic lead Carenza Lewis based at the University of Lincoln. The results of test pit excavations in 2018 will be reported in the next volume of *Medieval Settlement Research*.

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Captions

Figure 1 Map of Eastern England showing the locations of the CORS investigated by the HEFA project in East Anglia in 2017. Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Figure 2 Riseley, Bedfordshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 3 Histon and Impington, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 4 Stapleford, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 5 Foxearth, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 6 Hadleigh, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 7 Southminster, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 8 Wendens Ambo, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 9 North Warnborough, Hampshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 10 Healing, Lincolnshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 11 Old Clee, Lincolnshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 12 Brundall, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 13 East and West Rudham, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 14 Hillington, Norfolk showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 15 Blythburgh Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).

Figure 16 Rickingham and Botesdale, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (basemap © Edina Digimap, figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis).